

The entryway to the Hinayana/Fundamental Vehicle paths is the spontaneous and uncontrived awareness that aspires to *merely* attain liberation (such an awareness is also called 'renunciation'), while the criterion for entering the Mahayana/Universal Vehicle paths is the spontaneous and uncontrived awareness that aspires to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings (Bodhicitta).

	Entryway to Hinayana/ Mahayana paths	Vehicle	Paths	Obstruc- tions to be removed	Goal
Hinayana/Funda- mental Vehicle practitioners	Awareness that <i>merely</i> aspires to attain liberation (renunciation)	Hinayana/ Fundamental Vehicle	Hinayana/ Fundamental Vehicle paths	Afflictive obstructions	Liberation from cyclic existence (self- liberation)
Mahayana/Universal Vehicle practitioners	Awareness that aspires to attain enlightenment (Bodhicitta)	Mahayana/ Universal Vehicle	Mahayana/ Universal Vehicle paths	Afflictive and cognitive obstructions	Enlightenment /Buddhahood (which includes liberation)

There are numerous ways of categorizing the various levels of Hinayana and Mahayana paths that are needed to reach the two goals, but in general Hinayana and Mahayana paths are described in the scriptures as being five-fold.

There are five Hinayana paths:

1. The Hinayana path of accumulation
2. The Hinayana path of preparation
3. The Hinayana path of seeing
4. The Hinayana path of meditation
5. The Hinayana path of no-more-learning

and five Mahayana paths:

1. The Mahayana path of accumulation
2. The Mahayana path of preparation
3. The Mahayana path of seeing
4. The Mahayana path of meditation
5. The Mahayana path of no-more-learning

The five paths explained here are the five Mahayana paths.

This completes the presentation of the paths in general. What follows is an explanation of afflictive and cognitive obstructions.

Afflictive and cognitive obstructions

Practitioners who *merely* aspire to attain liberation and who follow the Hinayana/Fundamental Vehicle only need to remove afflictive obstructions, whereas practitioners who aspire to attain enlightenment and thus follow the Mahayana/Universal Vehicle have to eliminate both types of obstructions: (1) afflictive and (2) cognitive obstructions.

According to the Madhyamika Prasangika school of Buddhism, these two are removed in succession, with the elimination of afflictive obstructions preceding the elimination of cognitive obstructions. The reason for this is that afflictive obstructions are coarser than cognitive obstructions and thus easier to remove.

Afflictive obstructions

Afflictive obstructions refer to the root ignorance perceiving true existence, to the other afflictions (such as anger and attachment) induced by that ignorance, and to the seeds of both the foregoing.

In the context of afflictions, *seeds* hold the potential for afflictions to arise. When afflictions are not present in an ordinary person's mental continuum they lie dormant, i.e. they abide on a subconscious

level in the form of subtle potencies. These subtle potencies are called "seeds". For instance, when anger is not present in an ordinary person's mental continuum it abides in his continuum in the form of a seed of anger having the potential for anger to arise again. Then, when the conditions for anger to arise come together (e.g. feeling tired and encountering an annoying object) the seed of anger transforms into manifest anger, i.e. anger becomes manifest or present in that person's continuum.

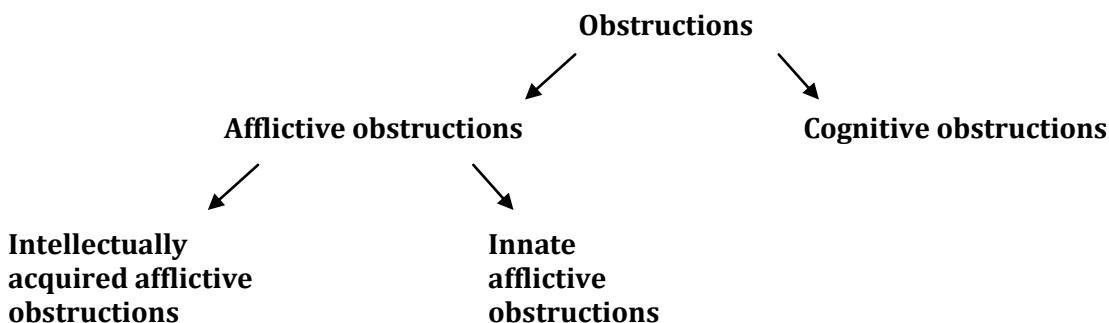
Hence, until the seeds of afflictions are eliminated, the potential for afflictions to arise is ever-present. The only direct antidote that can irrevocably remove any of the afflictive obstructions is the meditative equipoise that directly realizes the emptiness of true existence of all phenomena. This direct perceiver *gradually* eliminates (every time it arises in a practitioner's mental continuum) different layers of the root ignorance that perceives the true existence of phenomena, together with the seeds of those different layers of ignorance.

By gradually overcoming the different layers of the root ignorance, the meditative equipoise simultaneously eliminates the different layers of the other afflictions (anger, attachment, jealousy etc., which are induced by the root ignorance) together with the seeds of those afflictions.

Bodhisattvas generate such a meditative equipoise for the first time on the path of seeing, which is why they only start to eliminate obstructions once they reach that level of the Mahayana path.

Afflictive obstructions are further categorized into:

1. Intellectually acquired afflictive obstructions and
2. Innate afflictive obstructions.



1. *Intellectually acquired afflictive obstructions*

Intellectually acquired afflictive obstructions refer to intellectually or ideologically acquired afflictions and to the seeds of those afflictions.

For instance, intellectually acquired ignorance perceiving true existence, though rooted in *innate* ignorance, is a misperception that is not innate and inborn but is developed due to the influence of philosophical, religious, scientific, or cultural views and beliefs.

Other intellectually acquired afflictions, such as intellectually acquired attachment, anger, arrogance, and so forth, are afflictions that are induced by intellectually acquired ignorance.

Bodhisattvas remove intellectually acquired afflictive obstructions on the Mahayana path of seeing. These are the coarsest obstructions and are therefore eliminated first. Mahayana practitioners are unable to eliminate intellectually acquired obstructions during the Mahayana path of accumulation and preparation, for, as explained above, the direct antidote to the obstructions is the meditative equipoise directly realizing emptiness, which is attained for the first time on the path of seeing.

2. *Innate afflictive obstructions*

Innate afflictive obstructions refer to innate afflictions and to the seeds of those afflictions.

Innate afflictions arise naturally; they are inborn and thus not conditioned by the culture and environment we live in.

Furthermore, even if we have *directly* realized the lack of a truly existent "I" and "mine", until we overcome the seeds of the *innate* ignorance that perceives true existence, the spontaneous and instinctive misperception grasping onto a truly existent self, etc. will continue to arise in our mental continuum.